Saskatchewan Health

Fact Sheet

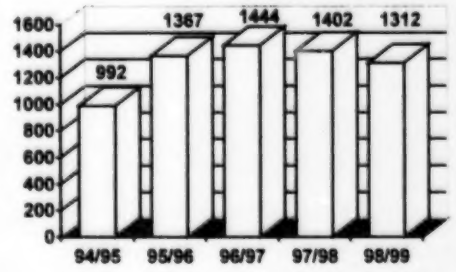
1998/99 Caller Profile
1-800 Problem Gambling Help Line

A toll free province-wide Problem Gambling Help Line was implemented in May, 1994. The 24 hour, seven day a week 1-800 help line is operated by Mobile Crisis Services in Saskatoon, Prince Albert and Regina. Calls are routed to one of the three centres depending on the location of the caller. The Help Line provides counselling, referral and information services. Callers may be referred to self-help groups, financial counsellors or problem gambling counsellors nearest their communities. The Help Line is available to help individuals learn more about problem gambling and to prevent and minimize the negative consequences associated with problem gambling.

Number of Calls

During 1998/99, a total of 1,312 calls were received from gamblers ("gambling callers"), and 600 calls were received from family members or friends of gamblers. Since the first full year of operation in 1995/96, the number of calls from gambling callers has stabilized at approximately 1,350 calls each year (Figure 1). The number of calls from family members or friends increased by 35% during the same period.

Figure 1: Calls From Gamblers



Sex

Sixty-one percent (61%) of all gambling callers were male. Since the implementation of the Help Line, the proportion of male callers has been just above sixty percent.

Age

The average age of gambling callers was 37. The largest proportion of gambling callers was in the 30-39 year old age group (36%), followed by 40-49 year olds (30%) and 20-29 year olds (18%) (Table 1).

The age of gambling callers to the help line has been increasing since 1995/96. There has been a decrease in calls from those under 30, and an increase in calls from those 40 and over.

Table 1
Age of Gambling callers

	95/96	96/97	97/98	98/99
19 and under	4%	2%	2%	2%
20-29	28%	26%	21%	18%
30-39	36%	38%	37%	36%
40-49	22%	24%	29%	30%
50-59	9%	8%	8%	11%
60 and over	2%	3%	2%	4%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

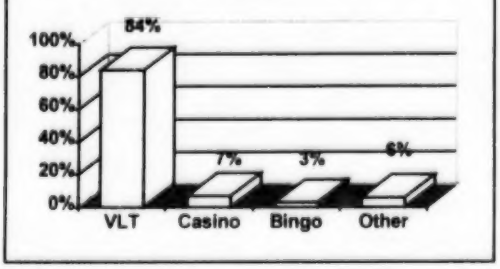
Marital Status

Over half of all gambling callers (57%) were either married or lived in a common law relationship. Twenty-eight percent were single and had never married. Thirteen percent were divorced or separated, and two percent were widowed.

Game of Choice

Among gambling callers over three-quarters (84%) played VLTs as their game of choice, followed by casino games (7%), bingos (3%), and other (6%) (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Game of Choice



Both men and women play VLTs as their game of choice (85% and 83% respectively). Seven percent of both men and women stated that casino games were their game of choice. Seven percent of women stated that bingo was their game of choice, compared to 1% of men.

Table 2
Game of Choice by Sex

	Male	Female
VLT/Slot	85%	83%
Casino	7%	7%
Bingo	1%	7%
Lottery tickets	2%	2%
Other	6%	2%
Total	100%	100%

The percentage of gambling callers who identified VLTs as their game of choice has remained relatively consistent since 1996/97. There has been a slight increase in casino games as the game of choice from 3% in 1996/97 to 7% in 1998/99.

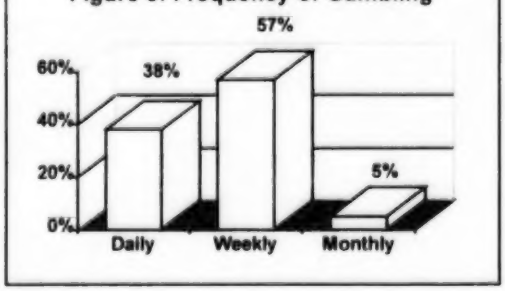
Table 3
Game of Choice

	95/96	96/97	97/98	98/99
VLT/Slot	74%	87%	84%	84%
Lottery tickets	12%	3%	2%	2%
Bingo	6%	4%	4%	3%
Casino	4%	3%	5%	7%
Other	5%	3%	3%	4%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Frequency of Gambling

Thirty-eight percent of all gambling callers gambled daily, 57% gambled weekly, and the rest gambled monthly (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Frequency of Gambling



Income

Forty-three percent of gambling callers earned under $30,000 a year (Table 4). Twenty-seven had an income of less than $20,000 a year. The percentage of gambling callers in the lower income groups has decreased since 1996/97. At that time 77% had an income of less than $30,000 a year, compared to 43% in 1998/99. The percentage of gambling callers with an

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income of $40,000 or over has increased from 17% in 1997/98 to 32% in 1998/99.

Table 4
Income of Gambling Callers

Under $20,000	27%
$20,000 – 29,999	16%
$30,000 – 39,999	25%
$40,000 – 49,999	22%
$50,000 and over	10%
Total	100%

Associated Problems

Sixty percent of gambling callers reported associated problems. Thirty-four percent of callers identified more than one problem. Of the gambling callers who reported associated problems, 76% had problems paying bills. Forty-seven percent had family problems, and 23% suffered from depression (Table 5).

Three percent of callers had been involved in illegal acts due to gambling, had been in jail, or had charges pending. Three percent had contemplated suicide.

Table 5
Gambling Callers Reporting Associated Problems

Bills/debts	76%
Family/friends	47%
Depression	23%
Work	4%
Suicide	3%
Illegal acts	3%
Substance abuse	2%
School	1%
Jail/charges	1%

Source of Help Line Number

The most common source of the help line number was from stickers on VLTs (59%), followed by phone book/operator (13%), and posters and pamphlets (8%) (Table 6).

Table 6
Gambling Callers Source of Help Line Number

VLT/Sticker	59%
Phone book/operator	13%
Poster/pamphlet	8%
Word of mouth	7%
Bar/casino/bingo staff	3%
Lottery tickets	2%
Bill board	1%
Radio	1%
Other	6%

Note: Due to rounding, percentages may not add up to 100%. Not all callers provided information on age, income, game of choice, etc. Percentage calculations are based on those callers who provided this information.

Data recording was modified in 1996/97 to report all other calls (such as requests for general information on problem gambling, winning lottery numbers, gaming venues and operating hours, wrong numbers, and crank calls) that had not previously been recorded. There were 2,163 other calls in 1998/99.

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